

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8728

INFO AMEMBASSY PANAMA

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, MX

SUBJECT: ECHEVERRIA AND TORRIJOS DECLARE SOLIDARITY
OVER CANAL.

1. "CALL ME UP ON THE TELEPHONE ANYTIME WE CAN HELP OUT,"
ECHEVERRIA TOLD TORRIJOS AS THE LATTER BOARDED PLANE TO
LEAVE MEXICO AFTER 24-HOUR, LOW-PROTOCOL SUMMIT MEETING IN
MEXICO'S SOUTHERN-MOST STATE OF CHIAPAS.

2. EARLIER, ECHEVERRIA TOLD PRESS THAT MEXICO CONSIDERED
PANAMA'S EFFORTS TO SECURE FULL SOVEREIGNTY OVER CANAL
ZONE "ONE OF THE GREAT CAUSES OF LIBERTY IN TODAY'S WORLD."
HE ALSO COMMITTED MEXICO TO COOPERTAING WITH PANAMA IN
EVENTUAL CONTRUCTION OF A NEW CANAL, SAYING HE HOPED
GOP WOULD UNDERTAKE SUCH A PROJECT BECAUSE PRESENT CANAL
WAS OBSOLETE AND UNSUITED TO SUPERTANKERS-"QUITE APART
FROM JUSTICE OF PANAMA'S CLAIM TO PRESENT CANAL."

3. AT FIRST RELUCTANCY, TORRIJOS ALSO ADDRESSED
CANAL ISSUE AND NEGOTIATIONS WITH U.S. IN RESPONSE TO
A "500-SQUARE MILE COLONY OF THE U.S." WHICH THE LATTER
WAS ATTEMPTING TO MAINTAIN IN A COUNTRY WHICH REFUSED TO
BE ITS COLONIAL SUBJECT. AT PRESENT, PANAMA WAS
CARRYING OUT A NON-VIOLENT "WAR OF LIBERATION" TO
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REGAIN ITS SOVEREIGNTY OVER CZ. BUT JUST AS U.S. NEGOTIATORS COMPLAINED THAT THEIR NEGOTIATING BUDGET WAS RUNNING LOW,"SO PANAMA'S PATIENCE IS RUNNING LOW" AND VIOLENCE WAS BECOMING AN INCREASING POSSIBILITY. WHEN ALL PEACEFUL MEANS WERE CLOSED, TORRIJOS WARNED, THEN A PEOPLE FIGHTING FOR LIBERATION MUST RESORT TO HO CHI-MIHN TACTICS(TORRIJOS ASKED THOSE NEWSMEN WILLING TO VOLUNTEER TO FIGHT FOR PANAMA'S LIBERATION TO RAISE THEIR HANDS--APPARENTLY WITH FEW TAKERS).

4. TORRIJOS SAID THAT IN PANAMA A YOUNGER GENERATION IS COMING ALONG WHICH BELIEVES MORE IN LIBERATION THAN IN NEGOTIATION, ADDING THAT HE EXPECTED THIS GENERATION--ONCE IT PERCEIVED THAT LAST HOPES FOR A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT WERE GONE--WOULD PUT FORWARD THEIR OWN PLAN FOR"RECOVERING OUR SOVEREIGNTY." THEREFORE, THOSE IN POWER NOW "HAD TO BE A BIT PRUDENT" AND AVOID TRADING PANAMANIAN SECURITY MERELY FOR GOOD HEADLINES.

5. TORRIJOS REFUSED TO MAKE ANY DIRECT COMMENT WHATEVER WITH RESPECT TO SNYDER AMENDMENT AND ANTI-TREATY MOOD IN U.S. CONGRESS. HOWEVER, HE NOTED IT WAS IRONIC THAT LEADERS OF A COUNTRY ABOUT TO CELEBRATE 200TH ANNIVERSARY OF ITS INDEPENDENCE WERE NOW SEEKING TO MAINTAIN A COLONIAL SITUATION AND 14 MILITARY BASES "BY THE SOLE REASON OF ITS SUPERIOR STRENGTH". TORRIJOS ADDED THAT NEXT YEAR, WHEN PANAMA CELEBRATES 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF BOLIVAR'S VICTORIES, IT WILL INVITE ALL THE CHIEFS OF STATE OF LATIN AMERICA TO COME TO SEE COLONIAL ENCLAVE AT FIRST HAND AND TO UNDERSTAND REASONS WHICH WILL "EVENTUALLY OBLIGE US TO TAKE ANOTHER ROAD IF (U.S.) CONTINUES TO TREAD UPON OUR SOVEREIGNTY."

6. ON OTHER SUBJECT:

--TORRIJOS SAID THAT MEETING OF MINISTERIAL REPS FROM LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES WOULD BE HELD TO FORM SELA. NEED FOR THAT ORGANIZATION WAS IMPERATIVE, SAID TORRIJOS, SINCE" ONE COULD NOT APPEAL TO HUMANITARIANISM WHEN IT CAME TO NEGOTIATING PRICES FOR OUR RAW MATERIALS."

--TORRIJOS SAW A NEW-STYLE MILITARY EVOLVING IN LATIN AMERICA, ONE WHICH WAS SERVING TO "CORRECT THE UNCLASSIFIED

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ERRORS OF THE POLITICIANS". IN CONTRAST, HE RECALLED THAT IN HIS YOUTH HE HAD SEEN MILITARY WAS USED TO SILENCE THE PEOPLE WITH BULLETS AND TEAR GAS.
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